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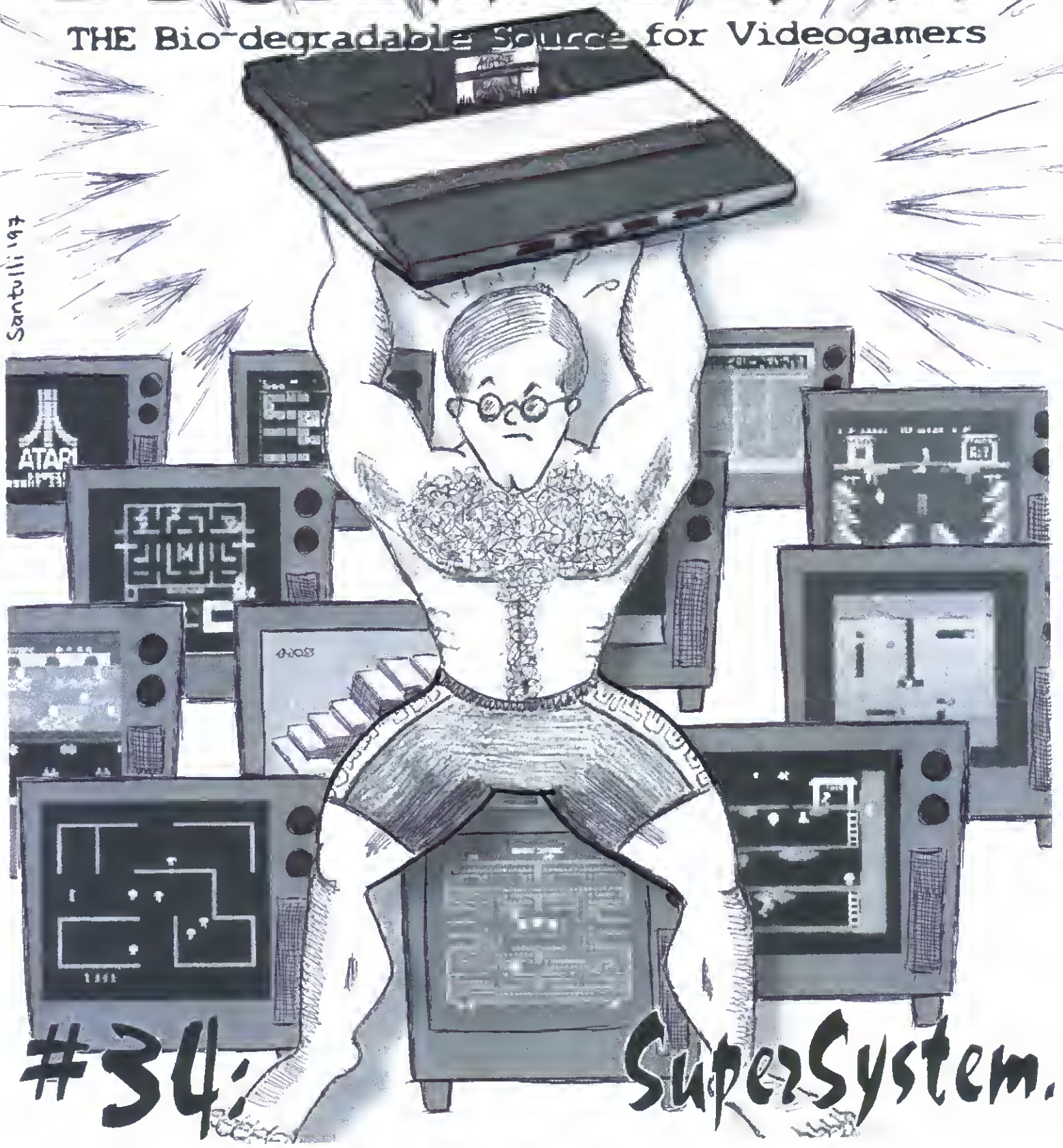
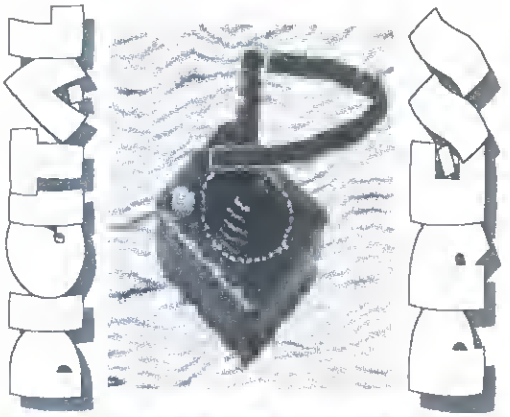


#34: SuperSystem.



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SUPERSYSTEM.

EDITOR'S BLURB by Joe Santulli

OK, just in case we haven't put anyone off in the past, this issue is just to make sure we do it to you at least once. Remember that this staff is composed of voracious game players bent on the conquest of every game ever created, followed shortly afterwards by the conquest of the world itself. You don't have an Atari 5200? Oh, I'm really sorry to hear that. Well, better luck next time, buster! Because the next 25 pages are devoted to a little talked about system, the Atari 5200 "SuperSystem".

We had fun putting this one together. There are some of us that just never really got into the Atari 5200 (Mark, Al, and myself among those), and some that have many happy memories alone in a room with it (Jeff is probably at the top of that list, sick perv that he is). So we set out to disect the thing. We're gonna tell you what's good about it, and we're gonna tell you what's bad about it. Then we're all going to get on with our lives. I'll be really curious to hear what you think about this "system themed" issue. Is it a keeper, or should we bury the idea?

On a completely different subject, a few weeks ago my friend and co-worker Anna recently summed up the state of mind of most gamers en route to Willowbrook Mall on a lunch hour, moments before purchasing **Tomb Raider II**. It had been something like the fourth or fifth consecutive time that our little lunch party "had to go" to Willowbrook Mall specifically so I could hit my fave Electronics Boutique (you know, the one I used to work at) and buy a game. We went when N64 **San Francisco Rush** was released. We went when **Jet Moto 2** was released. We went when **NBA Live '98** was released. I had to explain to Anna that this time of year is very SPECIAL to gamers, as most of the best releases are timed to hit the shelves right before the holidays.

Anna's response: "I think you're obsessed with this stuff".

Could I argue that? Nah. She's right. Just look at what I'm doing. Thirty four issues, six and a half years of "publishing" this video game rag. Many, many, many more years of playing. Too many dollars to even mention. What would have become of me if I focused my energies to something else, like world peace? What if I grew up and became a responsible adult? I sometimes wonder what that would be like...

But just then, I realize that I've come to that doorway where the three-legged mutant harpies keep gunning me down and I curse myself for letting my mind wander like that in such a dangerous area. So I'm obsessed. At least I ain't dead.

Hey, if I don't see/chat with/email you other obsessed people before the holidays, ENJOY THEM! May they be filled with many dead mutants, hidden areas, and really high scores. Toodles.

On The Cover

Strongest Nerd in the World
Artwork by Joe Santulli

Wait, it's me, isn't it? Well, this could be me in about ten years, or sooner if I have to continue lugging the extremely heavy SuperSystem 5200 from the Room of Doom to our TV set. Really, what the hell is in that thing? Lead? Cement?

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DIGITAL PRESS' CLASSIC VIDEO GAMES COLLECTOR'S GUIDE COMPANION

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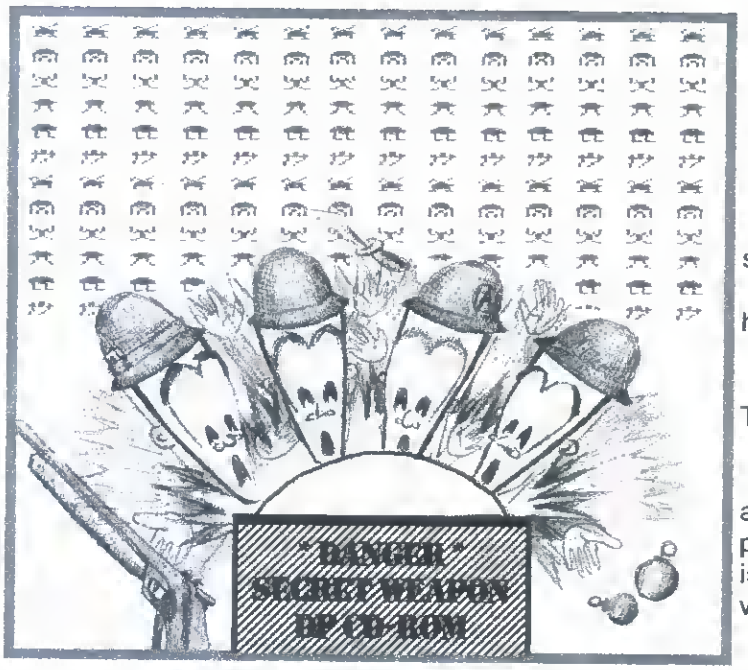
The ***Digital Press Collector's Guide CD-ROM Companion*** is now available! Here are some highlights as to what's included on this DOUBLE-CD:



- Over **1100** game box scans
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....and this only scratches the surface (not literally)! There are **8000+** files spread across two CDs!

There are a couple of different pricing options and packages available for those that would like to get a copy of the paper edition of the guide. The paper guide we are offering is the ***Digital Press Collector's Guide 4th Edition*** - the very same book this CD is based on. Here's the deal:

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SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: We've tried to be as "generic" as possible with the CD so as to make it available on most any platform. It is presented in HTML for use with an Internet web browser such es Netscape or Internet Explorer. So whether you have a Mac , PC or any computer with a web browser, you should have no problems. For PC users that do not have a web browser, we have included a thumbnail browser that will allow you to view all the pictures and videos on the disc, you will simply miss-out on the presentation aspect of the collection of images. The presentation of the images is really what makes this CD such an interesting product so we would highly suggest getting your hands on one. We tried for months to get permission to include one on the CD but we weren't able to secure permission.

A speedy CD-ROM drive would be highly beneficial. In testing, we tried it on various different drives. The images will load even on a single-speed (1X) CD-ROM drive, but they load damn slowly! While we didn't get fancy with the HTML (ie no CGI, Java, Animated GIFs, etc.) many of the pictures are quite large and the largest TV commercial is 18 megs! On some quad-speed (4X) drives, the videos were smooth and we didn't have a problem. On others, the playback was a bit choppy although they did play. We are suggesting an 8X or faster CD-ROM drive.

Classic vs. Retro

The (not so) Great Debate

by Clint Dyer

In the red corner, wearing the black trunks with the Atari 2600 logo on the front, "Retroooooooooo"! And in the blue corner, wearing the gray trunks with the Vectrex logo on the front, "Claaaaaaasic"! Let's get reeeeeady to rummmmmmble!

Throughout this article, I will use the words "I" and "me". In all but the first and last paragraphs, read those two words as "all those out there who are like me and don't follow the 'Retro' descriptions below".

Hello, I'm Clint Dyer and I've been into video games ever since there were video games. I owned the first **Pong** system I ever saw, though probably not the first Pong system ever. I had a Fairchild Channel F and all the games that were out. Our family would spend hour after hour competing with the neighbors down the street who also had one. I had the Atari 2600 in 1977 and my family played that thing to death from the moment it came into the house with **Circus**, **Outlaw** and **Combat**. I built up a collection of about 100 games by saving quarters that I would have to deposit in a jar for each game I played. Eventually I lost interest in video games and turned my interests to the fairer sex and computers. 3 or 4 years after that, once I had the fairer sex problem figured out, I got back into my old games. I got all my old 2600 and Fairchild games from my uncle back east who I let borrow them and really fell in love all over again. And, the rest, as they say is history.

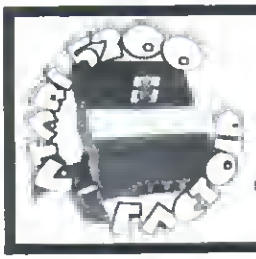
One of the terms I have heard used recently regarding classic gaming is the word "Retro". The word itself means backward or back, so technically, it is correct when refering to old games. Aside from the dictionary meaning, this word also has other connotations. It connotes "hip", "trendy", "in style", "fashionable", etc. It connotes Pet Rocks, Mood rings, Ginsui knives, 8-tracks and Beta VCR's. In short, here today, gone tomorrow. Used mostly in news reports on the web about companies trying to capitalize on the popularity of their classic games (Namco, Williams/Atari to name a couple), this word drives a spike through the heart of what I am. It is indeed here today, but for me, tomorrow will never come.

The word "classic", by definition means 1) serving as an outstanding representative of it's kind and 2) having lasting significance and recognized worth. The word really has no connotations, as everything it means is everything it is. It does a perfect job in describing what exactly the hobby is. It's collecting games that were an outstanding representative of it's kind (without the 2600, there never would have been a Satum or Playstation) and have significant value, not necessarily dollar value, but "worth" value to me. The games and the hobby are memories that I want to remember forever and will. I will remember opening the **Circus** game and playing it for 3 solid hours with my sister and father taking turns. I will remember going over to a friend's house on my birthday and him having **London Blitz** in the 2600 when I got there and saying "This is your birthday present, happy birthday!". If this were retro, none of those memories would have happened and the games would just be dinosaurs that are graphically challenged at best. They, in short would mean nothing to me.

Those that use, live and breathe the word "Retro" will lose interest and be out of the hobby when the prices rise above their expectations, or the supply of the games dries up or they just plain get tired of having all the clutter in the house. I'll be here to buy their games from them and when it becomes "Retro" again, they'll be buying the games back from me. I've been into it since it started and someone at a magazine that will die if/when the Playstation, N-64 or Satum will die telling me that the hobby I have enjoyed for over 10 years total is hip, trendy, in style or fashionable is quite annoying and quite incorrect. It's not those things for me. Rather, it's been those things since it started. It's in my blood and it's a part of my life - forever.

More about me:

I was born in 1967 in Lancaster, PA, my eyes are hazel, my hair is brown and my waist line is... Oh, wrong place, sorry. As you can probably tell from the article, I'm pretty well associated with the video game scene. I've worked at Sega for 7 years and more recently at a company that made games for their own desktop computer device. My goal in life would be to make games that I love to play and that everyone reading this would love to play as well. I have a collection of games that numbers close to 4,000 (3,600 to be more exact) and have close to 650 handhelds. I've written and maintain 4 F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions for internet lingo challenged people) on classic video games. My favorite is the Handheld FAQ, now going on it's 12 revision. The other 3 I've done are the Foreign Master System FAQ, the Fairchild Channel F FAQ and a spinoff of the handheld FAQ, called the "Keychain Games FAQ" (with 2 friends, Robert Wome - http://www.primenet.com/~rwome and Galen Komatsu - no web page). I've interacted with more people than I can count, including some of the best classic gamers on the planet in the B.A.V.E. group and at one time or another, received fanzines from all around the world. The best for the 2600 is Tim Duarte's "2600 Connection" (had to get the plug in there somewhere!). If you're interested in more of my ramblings, my handheld web page is located at http://www.best.com/~cdyer. 2600 Connection can be ordered by writing Tim Duarte at: timdu@hotmail.com or visiting his web page at: http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Lair/9260, or via snail mail: 2600 Connection c/o Tim Duarte PO Box 885 Mattapoisett , MA 02739.



The working title for Meteorites was rather humorously named "Disasteroids," indicating its resemblance in look and play to Atari's coin-op hit Asteroids. Atari quickly put a halt to that name when they gave stern warnings to Electra Concepts regarding the legal ramifications of such a title.

Atari 5200, Eh?

by Al Backiel

Topic A : THE JOYSTICKS - This is considered to be the major drawback with this system. Many gamers consider it to be the bane of its existence. These non-self- centering-hard-to-be-accurate monsters. A person can usually get used to anything, but I can't think of a single game where it would be considered an advantage. A few third party companies strived to come up with a better way and even Atari itself was reportedly working on a replacement. There are at least 4 existing alternatives. Unfortunately, all of these additional peripherals are rare. The first and foremost is the MASTERPLAY 5200 INTERFACE by Electra Concepts. This device enables you to play any 5200 games with the marvelously simple 2600 joystick. Now you can easily negotiate turns in maze games. The second choice is the WICO 5200 JOYSTICK, which is good, but perhaps too bulky. There are two large side-by-side fire buttons to accommodate both lefties and righties. The third choice is the COMPETITION PRO JOYSTICK by Coin Control which I haven't seen yet so I can't comment. All of the above still allow for simultaneous use of the regular joystick. After all, you still have to input things from the keypad like reset, pause, game options etc. The final option which I recall seeing in old video game magazines, was a clip-on centering guide which fit over the regular joysticks and forced it to center when it was released. Even if you are forced to use the regular joysticks, it does not mean the game is unplayable. Not by a long shot. Just consider yourself to be playing at a higher, more challenging level. You are therefore playing the game as it was intended to be played and not seeking any additional advantage.

Atari never quite got the handle on controllers for the 5200 SuperSystem

Topic B - The 5200 vs. Colecovision. Who won? Coleco hit the store shelves first and gained the initial advantage with graphics that were far superior to the existing Atari 2600. Atari fought back months later with the release of the 5200. Most of their titles were upgrades of games that were already out on the 2600. There were a few noteworthy exceptions like: Space Dungeon, Countermeasure and Qix. Coleco gamered more third party support and wound up with a larger library of games. The later releases for the 5200 were able to match Coleco as far as graphics and game play were concerned. Games like Rescue On Fractalus, Bounty Bob Strikes Back, Gremlins were state-of-the-art. Overall, I have to proclaim Coleco the unofficial winner in both quality and quantity.

Topic C - System Compatibility. All of the games can be played on the 4-port model. A few of the games will only work on the 2-port model. The 2-port model replaced the original 4-port model. Probably to cut costs. The extra joystick ports were not being utilized anyway. Some third party software was programmed on the earlier model. As a result the following games will only work on the newer system: Pitfall! , Mountain King, and K-razy Shoot-out.

Topic D - Game Saving. There are no game save options for 5200 games that I can recall. Once you power off, you must start all over again. There are no passwords or memory backups. This makes it tough to play games consisting of progressive levels that are impossible to finish in one session. Say for instance, Pitfall II. You must complete the first adventure to even start playing the second. There is a trick you can use. You can shut off the TV. But, do not unplug the adapter or remove, shut down, or reset the game. When you turn the TV back on you will be where you left off. You can even switch switched channels as long as you come back. This will work with most games and systems. I found it especially useful for Solomon's Key on the NES for example. I don't however recommend leaving the adapter in all the time. I tends to heat up and I believe this makes it wear out faster.

OUTRAGE!

Electronic Games Monthly really got me ticked off. They recently celebrated their 100th issue, The feature article was "The 100 Best Games of All Time'. Unbelievably they threw out everything that was older than the NES. That's right. There were no classic games mentioned. No Pitfall, River Raid, Robotron. No Coleco., Intellivision, period!

Their rationale was " Sure, we could have included Pong or Asteroids, but would you rather play those instead of Goldeneye 007 or Sonic CD?" The answer is YES! with an explanation. Ok, maybe not Pong. That would be too extreme, but I still enjoy the Asteroids-like Minestorm on the Vectrex. Or Shark! Shark! (INTV) or Tarzan on the Coleco. I could go on and on. The point is that a good game is still a good game even years

(Continued on page 21)

Curse of the Joysticks by John Hardie

Most classic gamers are well familiar with the "curse" of the 5200 joysticks. Even those that do not own 5200 systems have probably heard many a horror story concerning the infamous analog controllers. Pay attention the next time you're sitting around the campfire with your fellow gamers; I'll bet you hear at least 3 tales of 5200 sticks that are possessed by some evil entity or demon. Let's take a brief look at the 5200 stick and see what makes it work. Or not. Then we'll check into some viable alternatives.

Many gamers are quick to say "Those damn analog sticks!"; thus giving the impression that they are bad because they are analog. The truth is, the main problem with 5200 sticks is that they aren't self-centering. Analog sticks are actually superior to digital sticks when implemented correctly. Just take a look at the newest systems and computers as proof. Sony, Sega, Nintendo, and the PC market all have various analog sticks available for them. Another problem is the frequent breakdown of the keypad and fire buttons. Without getting into a detailed lecture on repairing joysticks, I can tell you that the most common fault lies in the flex circuit inside. Change the flex circuit to a Rev. 9 version. Then clean the discs on the back of the rubber keypads, fire buttons, etc. Also, I rotate the fire buttons. Since the top buttons hardly ever get used, they are usually in better shape. I would estimate that this will fix 9 out of 10 problems.

The 5200 sticks really aren't that bad! If you've ever played **Gremlins** or **Space Dungeon**, you'll probably agree. But granted, for most games they are horrendous. Precise movement and control is almost impossible which doesn't make **Bounty Bob** or **Pac-Man** very playable. Sooooo..... What options are available to the 5200 owner?

Well, there's always the trak-ball! Atari, perhaps realizing how much people disliked the standard sticks, did their best to make more than a few titles trak-ball compatible. **Pole Position** or **Jungle Hunt** with a trak-ball just doesn't do it for me, but obviously, classic trak-ball games such as **Missile Command** and **Centipede** shine brightly.

The most commonly found solution is the Wico 5200 joystick. These are analog sticks that either self-center or not depending on whether or not you lock the joystick with the switches on the bottom. The stick has 2 fire buttons and comes with a Y-cable adaptor. You still need a standard 5200 stick with a working keypad and Start buttons when using the Wico. The Y-cable adapter seemed to be a common solution used by different manufacturers. Wico also made a replacement keypad to be used with their sticks. Unfortunately the keypad is even harder to find than the sticks.

Coin Controls took a similar approach with their Competition Pro Joystick. This stick is much more solid and sturdy than the Atari or Wico sticks and has more of an arcade feel to it. Instead of a seperate Y-cable like the Wico, Coin Controls built the adapter into the actual joystick cable. This self-centering joystick featured 2 fire buttons and also required a working keypad from an Atari 5200 stick. It's a bit harder to find than the Wico stick.

The Fire Command Joystick from GIM Electronics featured a rectangular, heavy-duty metal base. At the heart of the unit is the self-centering joystick flanked by two fire buttons on each side. This unit also implemented a y-cable adapter to make use of the standard 5200 sticks' keypad. I recently spoke with GIM (yes, they're still in business) and was told that they threw out their entire joystick inventory about 2 months before I called (*sob* I'm always 2 months late).

At the other end of the spectrum, a company called Entertainment Systems sold the Control Guide 4-way adapter. Instead of replacing the 5200 stick, they designed a unit that went over/around the actual stick and limited its' movement to 4 directions. Even though the stick still didn't center by itself, games requiring more precise movements were made easier to control and more enjoyable to play. I've never seen a Control Guide although I would think there would be plenty of them around due to the low selling price of $6.95 plus S&H.

(Continued on page 21)

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rAnDom ReVIeWs

Berzerk

Atari 5200 | **Atari** | **Arcade**

Joe Santulli is leading the so-called "human" forces!

Element	Joe	Al	Clint	Keita
Graphics	4	6	6	6
Sound	8	7	5	9
Gameplay	7	6	7	7
Overall	7	7	5	7

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

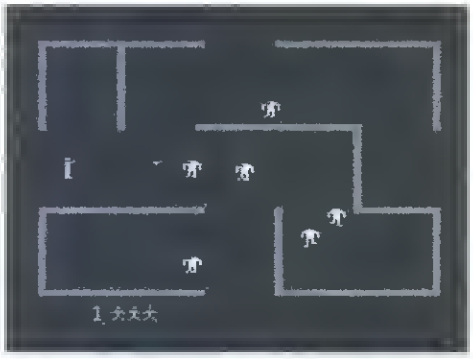
You probably think about this as much as I do - and feel exactly the same about it - but I just want to go on record as saying that *I'm not really looking forward to the day when robots take over the world.* I guess that's the reason why this game scares the living bejeezus out of me, then. I play **Berzerk** MUCH harder than I would play a game like **Defender**, for example. I mean, who would believe ALIENS taking over the world? That's just plain crazy. But each and every game of **Berzerk** is like a training exercise for me. I'm going to be ready when the robots try to take over. I'm not going down without a fight, you tin creeps! Fortunately for us humans, **Berzerk** is here for us now. It's not only a great exercise, it's also an awful lot of fun to play.

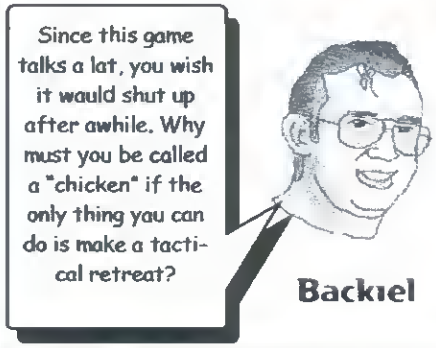
There have been many games that showcase the "robots dominating the earthlings" theme. **Frenzy** was the sequel that featured several different kinds of robots, walls that allow shots to ricochet, walls that can be shot through, and special rooms. **Robotron: 2084** featured an all-out assault by an even larger and faster robot army. The trend continues, with all kinds of creative twists and high-tech graphics, but few capture the cold clamminess of the robots and utter hopelessness of the situation as featured in the one and only **Berzerk**. And yeah, I kinda like cold, clammy, and hopeless, thank you.

Berzerk's main villain is perhaps the coolest in video game history. His name is Evil Otto. Evil Otto is nothing more than a smiley face, and if he showed up on your doorstep one day you probably wouldn't be very afraid. Be afraid. BE VERY AFRAID. The beauty of this villain is that despite his harmless exterior he is by far the toughest S.O.B. in the game. Evil Otto cannot be killed. He can bounce right over walls that would electrocute your human character. He is so Evil, this Evil Otto, that he will destroy even his own army of robots in order to get at you. No U-turns, no fancy maneuvers to avoid bashing his brainless lackeys... just a straight (bouncing) path from point A to point B where point B is wherever your sorry ass happens to be at the moment.

This game is also a favorite of mine because there's no way a game can go on longer than about ten minutes, which means I don't find myself in the middle of the night wondering how I'm going to function at work in a few hours. No, the bad guys put you away pretty quickly here. As you progress, the robots get faster, shoot more, and shoot faster. Eventually Evil Otto isn't even a factor. The real goal is to score points, and to do that, you need to eliminate ALL of the robots on each screen. You get an extra bonus for that. Run out of a room while robots are still hanging around and you get "CHICKEN, FIGHT LIKE A ROBOT" or some other demeaning phrase. Oh yeah, I should at least mention that this classic game even features the classic arcade voices! You can download them at the Digital Press website, they make great sound bites for Windows events!

Yep, I feel pretty sorry for the robot army that tries to take over MY world. I've had lots of training, thanks to **Berzerk**. And if a very small, smiling yellow man asks you the way to Digital Press headquarters, tell him JOE SANTULLI has been waiting for him.





alternative

If you REALLY like Berzerk, you can play it on the Atari 2600, too. Everything looks really big and chunky, but the gameplay is actually pretty faithful. There's also a version on the Vectrex that doesn't play so well and has some weird bugs if you score too high (!)

BUCK ROGERS: PLANET OF ZOOM

rAnDoM ReVIeWs

Atari 5200 **Sega** **Arcade**

Space Ranger Clint Dyer with the full brief from alpha sector seven

Element	Joe	Al	Clint	Keita
Graphics	6	8	6	6
Sound	5	6	5	6
Gameplay	5	6	5	3
Overall	5	7	5	4

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

I played **Buck Rogers** in the arcade until the cows came home. Then, I shot them with my **Buck Rogers** space ship and played some more. It was probably the first sit-down game that I played and one of the better classic sit-down games at making the player feel like he/she was really in the cockpit of the plane controlling the ship. The 5200 version, of course, can't match that feel. That aside, the 5200 version is as disappointing as all the other versions of the game. None of the home versions of this game have even come close to capturing the feel, fun and variety of the arcade machine. They all leave out levels and while that's common in home video games (especially those offered by Sega), in this case, it takes a lot of the variety out of the game and makes the game a lot less fun. As a game in itself, **Buck Rogers** isn't much of one.

The arcade game starts out in the trenches, where you have to shoot your way through the level, defeating a certain number of enemies before your fuel timer runs out to finish the level. The trench aspect doesn't add a lot to the game and really has nothing to do with the gameplay, it does add a bit of variety to the game. After you finish the first level, the game goes to a flat "world" where you have to slalom your way through a certain number of towers while avoiding or shooting enemies. This is where the 5200 version starts off. You start on the flat world and you have to slalom your way through a certain number of towers, then you go onto the next level. The second level is the same thing, only enemies appear from behind you that you can shoot. After a certain number of towers, you move onto the third level where a bigger variety of enemies (in the 5200 version, 2) come at you from the front and back a bit faster than the previous level, which makes them harder to hit. After this level, you go into space where you have to shoot enemies appearing behind you to reach the "mother ship". Hit the mother enemy dead center, and you start the levels all over again. Every level after that is the same as the precious four levels, only a bit faster and harder with different colors. No new enemies, no new tricks or anything. Not much in the way of variety, destroying anything that this game could be.

The most interesting part of the arcade game is the fuel meter. If you miss too many towers your fuel dwindles, and if you run out of fuel, you lose a life. In the arcade game, the player is forced to keep an eye on this meter to make sure you have enough fuel to complete the level. Unfortunately, this isn't the case with the 5200 version, as all you really need to do is pay attention to the enemies on the screen and where the next towers are coming from. Fuel won't be a factor. It would be much more interesting if as in **Zaxxon** the player had to pick up fuel power ups in order to advance.

Control isn't great in the game, especially if you've got a non-centering 5200 joystick. Making your way through the towers isn't impossible, but it is far less forgiving than it should be. You get hit sometimes when you're not even close to towers, especially when you're trying to get to the other side of the screen quickly. Conversely, the enemies are extremely easy to hit. It seems at times that you don't even need to be close to take out an enemy, which makes it so that you just have to keep your finger constantly pressing the fire button and eventually, you're going to hit them.

Graphics are very colorful, but in the way of detail, there isn't much there. The enemies and main ship are poorly drawn and the towers jump to the front of the screen (scale) poorly. There are no cool backgrounds or any other neat graphics to make the game seem more interesting than it is, or detract from the fact that there isn't much in the way of gameplay in this cart.

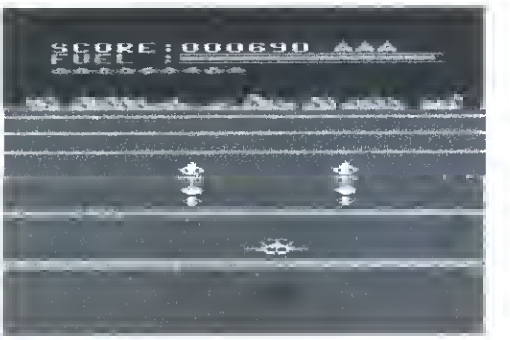
While **Buck Rogers** certainly isn't the worst shooter I've ever played, there are a lot better ones for the 5200, such as **Beamrider**, **River Raid** and **Star Wars: Arcade** to name a few. Play them instead and you'll have much more fun.

dp guide sez

The DP Collector's Guide (4th edition) rates this game a "3" on the scarceOmeter. "Named Best Action Game of 1984 (on all systems) by Electronic Games Magazine. #005-02.

It's nothing like the coin-op. The side walls are missing, scrolling is choppy and the visual splendor that was found in the arcade version are noticeably absent (as you'd expect).

Ida



rAnDom ReVIeWs

Kangaroo

Atari 5200 — **Atari** — **Arcade**

Scott Stone, really "hopping to it" on this review!

Element	Joe	Al	Clint	Sean
Graphics	8	7	8	6
Sound	6	7	8	6
Gameplay	5	7	7	4
Overall	5	7	8	5

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

You like fruit? In **Kangaroo** for the Atari 5200, Atari Computer and Atari 2600, the fruit abounds. In fact, it is about one half the size of the kangaroo itself! Not a great way to start a review you'd say, but if you've played this game, you know that the fruit is where it is at.

Kangaroo is presented well and it is very clear what needs to be done. The object of **Kangaroo** is to help Mother Kangaroo rescue her precious baby. Along the way, you meet mischeivous monkeys bent on knocking you with their seemingly endless supply of apples and otherwise totally ruining your day. Your main protection from this onslaught are your Punching Gloves. Hitting any button on your 5200 controller will allow Mother kangaroo to get rid of those monkeys and apples that get near you.

Through four stages of play where in each your goal is the same, you encounter many obstacles. In Stage one, for example, Mother kangaroo must hop along tree branches and climb up ladders to reach her baby. Stage two, being in my option the most imitating of the lot, you must leap across many broken logs in order to fullfil her destiny. The third Stage is pretty cool - as her baby is in a cage that is being held up by a large "stack" of monkeys. To succeed, you must either knock out the monkeys and bring that cage down to you, or try to climb the ladder to the branch which is possible to jump from to save your baby. All elements of the game is merged into the last stage which is particularly difficult indeed mostly due to the fact that apples are coming from all directions. If you complete all four Stages, you are invited to start over on Stage one at a higher difficulty level which tops out after 2 completions of all four stages.

Ok, on to the fruit! It comes in 4 varieties: Strawbemies, Tomatoes, Chemies and Pineapples worth from 100-800 points each. Finally in this game, the arguement between whether or not Tomatoes are a fruit or vegetable is resolved! These fruit are the main source of points short of your bonus points for completing a stage. **Kangaroo** is made even more interesting by the fact that you can really get greedy and get thousands of points in a stage thanks to the Bell. Hitting a bell located on each stage will cause fruit that has already been collected to be replaced by the next most valuble fruit, ending up with the Pineapple. On the first stage, for example, you can conceivably collect 6,000 points in fruit alone! Keep any eye on the bonus counter because if it hits zero, you lose a life.

This game, as played on the Atari Computer or Atari 2600 version, controls great with the digital sticks. On the other hand, as has been mentioned by many in the past, the stock Analog Atari 5200 sticks are not suited for this game and hurts gameplay some. Despite this, the 5200 version of **Kangaroo** can be played and played well with a little practice (and a steady hand!). As far as arcade conversions go, **Kangaroo** is a very good replication of the arcade original. Although, those familiar with the arcade game may notice that there is something missing. The arcade **Kangaroo** featured a BIG APE which would challenge you when your bonus reached a certain time left. His sole purpose in life was not to kill you, but to steal your punching gloves, leaving you vulnerable. When you tried to punch, all you showed was a liftle white flag.

There is one thing **Kangaroo** (in all versions) that irritates me as a gamer. When you are on a log or branch and walk off the edge, no mafter how short of a distance it is from where the platform was and where you were to land, you die. Simple as that. A nice feature would have been too allow SOME levity when walking off branches or logs. But, as a true gamer - you adapt - or perish!

Kangaroo is a fine game for the Atari 5200, barely a TOP 10 in my opinion. If you happen to find one while you are scouring the world for games.... do yourself a favor: pick it up and have some fun!

I was never a fan of Kangaroo. To some, they're cuddly. Last time I cuddled one of these I wound up with a faceful of sharp talons! Oh, the game isn't very "cuddly" either. I keep slippin' off the edges, man!

Santulli

You play the part of a Kangaroo, what else could you ask for? Can you say Kangaroo jerky? I thought you could!

Dyer

Miner 2049'er

rAnDoM ReVIeWs

Atari 5200 **Big 5 Software** **Action**

Keita Iida leading the expedition:

Element	Joe	Al	Keita	Scott
Graphics	8	8	8	7
Sound	6	7	8	7
Gameplay	7	9	8	5
Overall	7	8	8	6

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

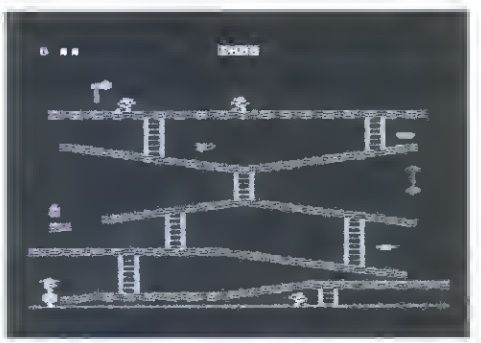
Miner 2049er came out in over 15 different formats, mostly from newer and smaller companies like Tigervision and MicroFun. Big Five also falls in both of these categories. Since Big Five's head honcho, Bill Hogue, originally created **Miner** on the 5200 and Atari Computers, it comes as no surprise that the Super-System version (which is identical to the Atari computer version) is the best one available. The game has ten different screens, and is arguably the ultimate climbing game.

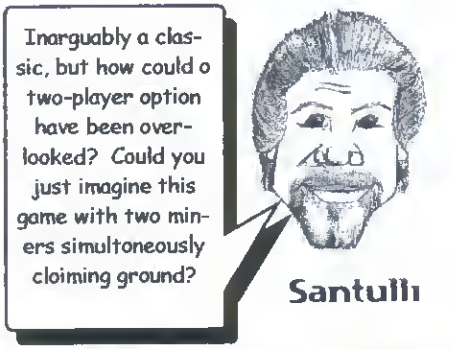
In this **Miner**, you take control of Bounty Bob, who is searching through all of Nuclear Ned's abandoned mines for the treacherous Yukon Yohan. Bob must claim each section of each mine by running over it. There are radioactive creatures to avoid, but Bob's most difficult task is the precision jumping necessary to claim the entire mine before the time runs out.

The beauty of this game is that each of the ten screens has been carefully thought out. On some screens there is only one way to complete the screen, and it may take dozens of plays to figure out the proper way, unless the player pauses and carefully studies a screen before playing it. Even then, the correct path is not always obvious. Some critical jumps are only one pixel out of reach. The game play is never boring because proper timing of jumps is still very challenging even when the correct rout is figured out. If that isn't enough, there are ten different skill levels, with the highest level being absolutely inhuman in its difficulty!

Most of the screens have special features. Slides, Star Trek-like transporters, moving platforms, a moveable hoist, and a cannon are only some of the surprises in this multi-faceted game. Although the graphics of Bob and the radioactive creatures are nothing to write home about, the prizes that Bob must grab to vanquish the creatures are beautifally rendered. The prizes range from axes, to dynamite and martinis and everything in between. The special effects are also excellent. If Bob becomes contaminated he is fried into a radioactive pancake.

This game has it all. Tireless, entertaining, consistent game play; above average graphics and sound effects; an original reworking of an established theme; and a darn good sense of humor. Even the 5200 controller works reasonably well with this game. **Miner 2049er** for the 5200 gets the highest recommendation, and is, without a doubt, in a class above other great climbing contests like **Donkey Kong** and **Space Panic**.





rAnDoM ReVIeWs

RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR

Coin-op/PSX — **Midway** — **Arcade**

Tony Bueno provides the brains behind the brawn!

Element	Tony	Clint	Joe	
Graphics	7	9	7	
Sound	7	7	6	
Gameplay	9	7	7	
Overall	8	8	7	

X	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

The premise behind **Rampage** has got to be one of the best ideas for a video game ever conceived. Japanese monster movies seemingly live to be lampooned, often they borderline on self parody. Given their nightmarish scenarios, shoddy special effects, and even worse acting, one might expect the game to embrace similar values. Well, yes and no.

Rampage World Tour begins with a comely female lab technician babbling about stopping production of a chemical before... (large explosion, computer screen reads:)

c:> Lab technicians exposed

c:> General population not at risk

The next moment has our familiar characters George (gorilla), Lizzie (Lizard), and Ralph (Wolf), or any combination of these three wallowing in wanton, mindless destruction.

Your main adversaries are the machine gun firing helicopters, dynamite throwing soldiers, rednecks with shotguns, and policemen with pistols. It's all basically a short-timed game (not with a time limit, but rather an energy bar) where you die pretty quickly, then can't resist pumping more tokens into the machine to progress further. Like the original, when you die, your character shrinks back into a tiny naked human and covers his or her genitalia before creeping off the screen.

Gameplay is nearly identical to the 1980's coin-op, with the addition of a kick as well as a punch. Kicking buildings repeatedly results in either side crumbling, whereas punching does limited damage. It also comes in handy with police cars, tanks, and ED 209 attack robots. People may also be kicked, which splatters them all over the pavement, but I generally prefer to press down and punch instead, so that they will be eaten. It should also be mentioned that your character may eat the splattered remains as well, but then you dn't get to hear the humans scream before meeting their grisly demise.

The graphics, while not outstanding, are above average, with the exception of the intermissions with the lab technician, Dr. Betty Veronica. Here, polygonal graphics are utilized to make a person appear more 3-dimensional than the traditional 2-D perspective. I've said it before, and I'll say it again. I HATE POLYGONS! Why on Earth this trend has become so popular is an unfathomable mystery to me. I was one of the few people who felt **Tomb Raider** was overrated, not just because of the graphics (Lara Croft's breasts look like she just stepped out of an early 90's Madonna video), but also due to the puzzles that were either child's play or way too time-consuming. The monsters look similar to the rendered (I don't think they're polygonal, but I'm not positive) characters in **Donkey Kong Country**. Buildings, people, and vehicles fortunately are all 2-D - just the way I like them.

Rampage World Tour is, as you may have already deduced, chock full of humorous antics. Spotting a priest and a group of nuns, naturally these were the first people I chose to eat. Apparently this is a no no, because doing so resulted in my character getting struck by a bolt of lightning! The original **Rampage** had one human character that would be held rather than eaten for bonus points. I remember it being a woman in a red dress for George. But when I grabbed her out of the window this time - chomp! Destroying a mausoleum revealed a group of skeletons which, when eaten, caused my character to vomit. Strangely enough, when I ate a zombie roaming around the graveyard, my character munched him and muttered, "MMM!" just like with any other food item or human. Aside from the clergy, very little is sacred in this game. You are rewarded for eating homeless people on benches, elderly men and women crawling for their lives after leaping from the window, school children, and groups of tourists unfortunate enoughto be caught in a tourist trap (i.e. giant igloo in Deluth, Minnesota). Regular food items include french fries,

(Continued on page 15)

alternative

If the coin-op and Ploystation updotes to the classic don't cut it for you, there's several ploces you go ta to ploy the originol. The originol Rompage exists for NES, SMS, Atari 2600, 7800, Lynx ond mast home computers!

Ok, so it's virtually no different from the original Rampage game, is that a bad thing? Graphics have been 90's-ized, but that and a few minor changes, everything else remains as it was, including the great gameplay.

Dyer

Space Dungeon

rAnDom ReVIeWs

Atari 5200 **Atari** **Action**

Keita Iida's reason to own an Atari 5200 explained:

Element	Joe	Clint	Scott	Keita
Graphics	7	7	9	9
Sound	8	9	9	9
Gameplay	8	8	10	10
Overall	8	8	9	10

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels	X	Non-Linear Gameplay

After playing the 5200 version of **Space Dungeon** back in 1983, I was surprised to learn that the Taito coin-op of the same name was a dog as far as the gameroom audience was concerned. How could a contest that combined the best elements of **Robotron** and **Venture**, along with a slew of original features, pass virtually unnoticed in the arcades of America? Perhaps **Space Dungeon** is exactly the sort of game that just aches for home translation, where gamers have the chance to sit down and learn the types of tactics and skill necessary to conquer it, without the annoying need to dump token after token into a hungry coin-op machine. This was not lost on Atari when they scooped up the home console rights to this game.

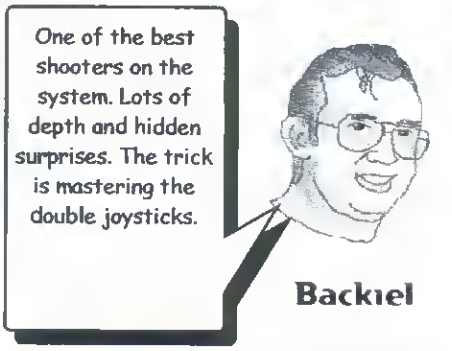
The object of **Space Dungeon** is to move through a series of connected rooms in search of treasure. Once you've picked up all the artifacts, you must make your way back to the room that contains the words "Collect Bonus." At this point your score is credited for every prize in your possession. From here you move on to the next level.

Each level consists of 36 rooms, stacked six high by six across. As you move from chamber to chamber, your path is plotted on a small grid at the top of the screen. A solid colored block denotes a room that shows your present position. Any room thatis yet unvisited remains blank. Sounds like **Venture**, right? Well, sort of. Up to a point similarities do exist. But where **Venture** failed, **Space Dungeon** excels. This cart is full of the good stuff that seperates good games from great ones -- the element of surprise. Although each room (as far as shape and size are concerned) is identical, no two boards contain the same number of treasures or the same number of aliens. Some compartments will be void of opposition. Others will be teeming with bad guys that are bent on keeping a good distance between you and the loot.

Gathering the treasure is simple -- you need only to run over the mish-mash of crosses, shields and vessels when they appear. Battling the bad guys is another story. Your circular space craft can fire in eight directions. None of this one shot at a time stuff; this ship is an awesome killing machine. The trick of the matter is learning how to operate two joysticks simultaneously. The right stick is used to move your ship. The left controller aims and fires your lasers. Those of you who are familiar with **Robotron**'s control scheme (who isn't?), will feel right at home. The controversial 5200 controller is well suited for proper maneuvering and firing, so you only have your ineptitude to blame for any loss of life. A handy dual-joystick holder is packaged with the game as well (it's also included with **Robotron**, the only other game that utilizes the dual-joystick control mechanism).

One feature peculiar to **Space Dungeon** is the bonus system. Assuming you have acquired all the treasures (or even none at all!), you can move on to the next level by simply entering the "Collect Bonus" square. Another thoughtful bit of programming elminates the dreaded "you gotta start over from the beginning when your man gets hit" situation. When your ship falls prey to an enemy shell or laser blast. all the treasures collected up to that point are redeposited in the room you occupied at death. You are then placed back in the lower left hand corner of the grid. To recapture the treasures you must move to the room that is appropriately marked with an "X". This is far better than having to trudge through the entire level all over again. This entire bonus system adds a healthy dose of strategy -- do you exit a level with only a handful of treasure and try to go to the highest level possible, or should you be greedy and daring and further explore the dungeons for more.. at the risk of having the Thief stal all your hard-earned artifacts, or worse yet, dying withough being able to cash-in? Remember, you don't get ANY points for picking up treasure, you only collect bonus points by taking them to the "Collect Bonus" square.

Space Dungeon offers intruiging, high-tech graphics, riveting audio accompaniment and just the proper amount of strategic viability. The **Robotron**-esque action will challenge you, and the exploration element of the game will tantalize you. It's arguably the best game on the 5200 and reason enough to own a Super-System.



rAnDoM ReVIeWs

Star Wars: The Arcade Game

Atari 5200 **Parker Bros.** **Arcade**

Game review courtesy of our resident Jedi Knight, Clint Dyer

Element	Scott	Clint	Sean	Keita
Graphics	7	6	7	8
Sound	7	8	7	8
Gameplay	7	7	7	6
Overall	7	7	7	7

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

I've been a huge fan of Star Wars since I saw the movie when it first came out. I've made it a point to get every Star Wars game I could, for every system, boxed and complete. The Star Wars games have a special mystique about them that no other games have. Perhaps that's only in the mind of this Star Wars collector wanna-be, but I have thought that since I played the first Star Wars games on the 2600 and their arcade counterparts. I've also always thought that you could take a piece of dog poop, attach a Star Wars logo, and it would sell millions of copies. Which is unfortunate. It gives the company doing the game no incentive what-so-ever to make an enjoyable video game! Just throw some programming into it, add some graphics and don't worry about things like gameplay, fun or presentation. It's going to sell a million without all that, so why bother? Fortunately, the people at Parker Brothers weren't interested in that mentality. The Star Wars games, as a whole, for the classic home systems are pretty good. Star Wars: The Arcade Game for the 5200 is one of the better games. While certainly not perfect, it does hold up pretty well against the "Star Wars" arcade game. The action, just as in the arcade game takes place on 3 different fields of play: in space, on the surface of the Death Star and in the trenches. Each level is similar, yet different enough to make the game player want to come back and play the game after the first time. The flash that was in the arcade machine is sadly missing. There are no huge lined Death Star explosion when a level is finished, there is no Luke voice saying "Red 5, I'm goin' in" and no R2 voice beeping the beeps that

he beeps. In short, there are no little extras that would make this game a 9 or 10. Other than those drawbacks, gameplay is actually quite fun and rather addicting (I'm fighting the urge to go back and play it after 3 games to refresh my memory as we speak). The levels are as follows:

Level 1: You control Luke's X-Wing while you try to shoot down Tie fighters to gain access to the surface of the Death Star. You start the game with 9 shields, lose 'em and the game is over. The Tie Fighters, at first, move and fire slowly and in later levels, the action gets faster and more furious and you find yourself fighting to save your precious shields. The action, however in this version never gets quite as fast and furious as the arcade game. The control in this level of the game is decent enough. The cursor moves around quickly and I never found myself not being able to get to the bullets shot at me. Speaking of which, the bullets in this level are incredibly weak compared to the arcade game. They are just tiny blobs of something coming at you. When they get to a certain point, they hit you, you can't get away from them, only shoot them. The point at which they hit you doesn't make much sense at all. They seem to be too small to really be close to hitting you, and throughout the 3 levels, this is the biggest problem. Unlike the arcade game, where the enemies stick around and fly into the Death Star, the enemies just disappear when the Death Star comes on the screen and then the next level "loads", which, by the way is a rather long time. The level, overall however is a lot of fun and is fast enough to make your hands sweat, which is, in the long run, all a gamer could ask for.

Level 2: The object in this level is to hit all the tower tops while avoiding blasts from the ground. The arcade game also

(Continued on page 15)

wish list

Lucas or Parker Brothers really needs to do a compilation disc for Playstation and/or Saturn. Heck with the new games Lucasarts, do the old ones for the new systems!

Not many vector to raster conversions impress me, but this one just barely crosses that line. It IS Star Wars after all.

Kelly

deja vu

Star Wars: the Arcade Game is based upon the "Star Wars" arcade game. It's a shooter, but it's also one that hasn't really been copied. There is a Star Wars game for the 32X that is similar in concept and was most likely based upon this game.

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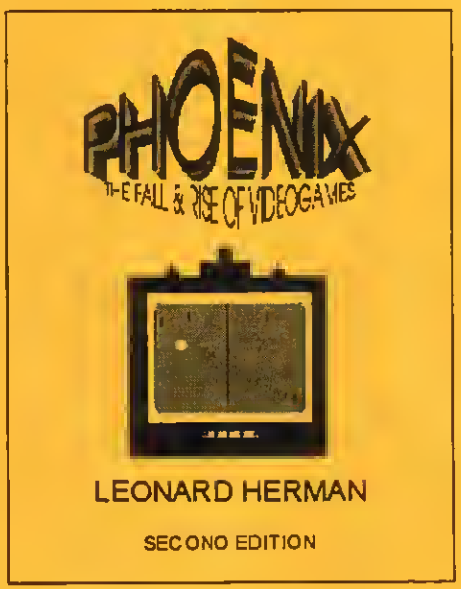


Lite rAnDoM ReVIeWs

Same great random review taste, but with fewer calories!

RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR

Continued from page 11

burgers, bacon and eggs, steak, turkey, coffee, fruit, and water bottles. Cows, chickens, pigs, cats, and goldfish may also be eaten for more energy.

As the title implies, this game takes players all over the globe. A somewhat uninspired bonus stage determines what destination will be demolished next (I've made it to Madrid twice and Liverpool once). My only complaint is that the buildings and houses never appear too much different, regardless of the location. The preview for the game depicts a Scumlabs moonbase, complete with astronauts and alien adversaries, although this reviewer has never succeeded in penetrating that far into the game.

Rampage World Tour is by far the most fun arcade game I've played all year, surpassing even the **Pac-Man**, **Dig Dug**, and **Arkanoid** upgrades. Not to be morbid, but there's a genuine sense of accomplishment and stress relieving pleasure to be derived from destroying every building and vehicle in sight while scarfing down citizens like popcorn.

As for the Playstation conversion - although I do like it and if it's not identical to the arcade, you'd have to do a direct side by side comparison and strain very hard to notice if there are indeed any differences, but there are some negative aspects:

1. Health meter no longer says "excellent" "Feelin' OK" "Groggy "Weak", etc.
2. Damage to your character seems very upscaled. You die a lot quicker in this version.
3. Damage is inconsistent. Sometimes six bullets take off 1/10, sometimes four bullets will take off the last 1/3 of your life.
4. The monsters, although polygonal, don't look bad. The intermissions between levels look terrible, worse than the cartoon Reboot (but, to be fair, they were the same in the arcade).
5. When continuing, you can't switch monsters.
6. There is no three player option.
7. The mid-level intermissions repeat themselves over and over and over.
8. There is no difficulty switch, and you are given unlimited continues.
9. There is little incentive to keep playing after completing this game once.

All of this may make it sound like I dislike the game, but that's not true. It's probably the best game to release aggression since **Duke Nukem 3D**. It will definitely get repetitive, however, and this one players should definitely try to rent before purchasing.

STAR WARS: THE ARCADE GAME

Continued from page 13

had turrets on the ground that shot at you, and they are removed from this version, though the shots still come, apparently from hidden turrets in the ground. There are a few problems with this level as well. The towers are incredibly choppy. There are 3, maybe 4 "frames" of animation until they get past you or hit you. Again, the towers don't appear to be close enough to hit you, but they do and it really detracts from your task of shooting the tops off of them. After about 2 or 3 levels, I just gave up shooting at the tops and tried to hit the shots coming at me. This level would probably be more fun if the towers had a couple more frames of animation and got a bit bigger before they hit you, allowing you more of a chance to hit the tower tops. The level, after a while (maybe 2 times through?) ends and the next level "loads", this time it's a little less of a wait.

Level 3: Here, the object is to avoid hitting the beams and blasts coming at you in the trench on the Death Star's surface. The arcade version had turrets on the walls that you could shoot, and this version has those invisible, non-hittable turrets. The beams are, much less choppy than the towers, but some choppy animation can still be seen. At the end of this level, you have to push the fire button at the correct time to blow up the Death Star once and for all. Er, until you do it again in the next level (the Empire does indeed build fast, don't they?!). This last task is a much more difficult one, since the spot that you have to hit appears and shows maybe 3 or 4 frames of animation, then is gone. It's much more difficult to hit than the arcade version, though certainly not impossible

All these bad points may sound like I don't like the game. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I DO like it. I like it a lot and will play it over almost all other 5200 games. But, the points mentioned above do definitely distract from the game and should, as I have done be noted. Some of these problems may be due to the limited power of the 5200. I honestly don't know. Either way, it doesn't make much of a difference, because a distraction is a distraction, no matter it be from system limitations or bad programming. I would, however, definitely suggest picking up this title and giving it a LOT of plays. Just don't expect a perfect arcade translation! May the yada, yada, yada, yada, yada. (like you don't know the saying)!

The engineers were so edamant in their disapproval of the 5200's controllers that they sent e petition to the director of engineering in hopes that the non-centering joystick would not be released in its finished form.

Lite Reviews

Astro Chase

Parker Bros, for Atari 5200

Astro Chase is such a pretty game to look at, it seems a shame that it isn't more exciting to play. At first glance Astro Chase looks like a space game with EVERYTHING. It's got shield depots,it's got energy generators and it's got pulsating enemy minesso powerful that just one of them can blow up the entire Earth. It's got a screen full of zillions of colorful asteroids, planet sand stars, and a picture of Earth so realistic that you might mistaken it from an actual photo taken from a satellite in orbit.There are eight different kinds of enemy spacecrafts, 34 difficulty levels and no less than seven different animation sequences.

Once the game begins, however, the gorgeous 3-D starfield is just another 2-D maze -- with round obstructions instead of walls --through which you must carefully dodge in order to ray down the mines creeping towards the Earth. Enemy spaceships show up at odd intervals to distract you from your main job of eliminating the mines, and you can either shoot them or ram them. It seems the celebrated First Star designer Fernando Herrera either ran out of room for, or forgot about, challenging and innovative game action. **Astro Chase** is one big letdown and serves as a reminder that graphics are only skin deep. - Ilda

5

Choplifter!

Atari, for Atari 5200

The SuperSystem edition of the smash computer game **Choplifter** combines the best elements of both the Atari Computer and Apple II versions, making it the best one available. The 5200 Choplifter's decent animation and graphics are reminiscent of the 400/800 cartridge, but the two-button action from the original Apple II game has been restored, thanks to the 5200 controller's two button joystick.

In **Choplifter**, you direct an armed helicopter, which forays across the border into hostile enemy territory. The object of the mission is to rescue as many of the American hostages as possible and bring them back to safety in U.S grounds. However, the chopper can only carry 16 at a time, and each successive trip brings new hazards to be overcome, like tanks, fighter planes, and smart bombs. With its terrific blend of action, strategy and challenge, **Choplifter** offers replay value like few others. - Iida

8

Congo Bongo

Sega, for the Atari 5200

From the first time I played this game in the arcade, it intrigued me. The 3-D perspective was different from any other game I'd played at the time and the game was interesting enough concept wise. I was never much very good at this game in the arcades. It seemed no matter how long I played, I never got much further than the second level. I always had fun playing, though, so I always plopped quarter after quarter into it.

Much like **Donkey Kong**'s first level, the object is to get to the top of the screen, where the gorilla (the most mischievous gorilla in the jungle, btw) is to get to the next level. The arcade game had 3 or 4 different screens to go through and the 5200 has only two, Monkey Mountain and Lazy Lake. It would be nice to have all the screens from the arcade game, but it's very common for home video games to not have all the levels of the arcade machine. I guess companies think name alone is enough to sell the game and the less work they have to do to sell it, the better. That aside, this game does contain most of the aspects of the arcade game, which is more than most arcade conversions can say.

You start the game out on Monkey Mountain, where you have to scale the cliffs while avoiding the monkeys and coconuts to make it to the top of the screen where the gorilla is. Instead of just having to go left and right like most other games that were available at the time, this level is 3-D, meaning that in order to get to the top, you have to go back into the screen and toward the front of the screen to get past the obstacles. At first, this level is rather simple. The monkeys aren't really much of a distraction and the coconuts are easily avoided. In later levels, this changes and the monkeys get faster and the coconuts are harder to avoid, especially at the top of the screen, close to the gorilla.

The second level all but abandons the 3-D aspect of the first, except for in a few places. In this level, you have to go from the left hand side of the screen to the right where the gorilla is. Between you and the gorilla is a vast body of water. In order to get to the other side, you have to ride one of 3 hippos to the islands in the middle, then catch a ride on fish to get to the other side. The fish and the hippos are easy enough to get onto, but randomly drop under the water, which makes it more difficult to progress. All the while, you have to avoid bats flying overhead.

Graphically, the arcade game is extremely impressive. The level of detail in the characters is incredible and the detail in the levels is also great. Although the 5200 game is nowhere near as detailed as the arcade machine, the graphics are still decent compared to other 5200 games. Nothing to write home about, but the 3-D view is still there and the detail level isn't bad. Although I've never been a fan of the 5200 joysticks (who is?), they are perfect for the 3-D aspect of this game and allow for the same feel as the controls of the arcade machine. If they weren't what they were, some of the worst controllers ever made, I'd even

7

go as far as to say that they would be better than the controls of the arcade machine!

The game isn't the best for the 5200, but it certainly isn't the worst either. It's a fun game to play, and if you have a Masterplay Interface or a third party 5200 joystick, it's that much better. - Dyer

Defender
Atari, for Atari 5200

Along with 5200 **Pac-Man**, **Defender** showed very quickly why the Supersystem was super. 2600 **Defender** was actually pretty good-for the 2600. But it wasn't remotely like the arcade game either graphically or in intensity. The 5200 version is very close to the Williams classic, and certainly represented a quantum leap that made the 2600 cart seem, well, puny. All the familiar evil alien guys are here and they do the nasty things they are supposed to do. The sounds and explosions are at least reminiscent of the arcade experience, if not dead on. If you can find a working joystick, response is very good. In attempting to master **Defender**, I found myself getting offed very quickly over and over and over. Then, quite suddenly, I got the hang of it and was able to play for long sessions. My expereince was the same on the arcade machine, which I later bought. The classic **Defender** ports for the Jaguar and the PSX are arcade perfect and feature slightly more difficult gameplay than the 5200 version. But this cart holds up surprisingly well. - Cooper

8

K-Razy Shootout
CBS Electronics, for Atari 5200

It would be an understatement to suggest that **K-Razy Shoot-Out** belongs to the **Berzerk** school. Being part of the school connotates following basic principles, but having some measure of individuality.

Both **Berzerk** and **K-Razy Shoot-Out** are virtually identical. So much so that I can't see any reason for CBS to have released this cartridge. The graphics are sparse, though the little pirouette the Commanders perform when they die is quite comical. Perhaps the one major element that differentiates **Berzerk** from **K-Razy** is the voice, or lack thereof in the case of the latter. Unlike in **Berzerk**, you won't hear insults and taunts spouted your way by some smiley-faced creature, and **K-Razy Shoot-Out** loses points in the charm department as a result. Otherwise, it's no better or worse than **Berzerk**, which means it's a challenging, steady-nerves contest that gets repetitive rather quickly. - Iida

5

Moon Patrol
Atari, for Atari 5200

I loathed this game in its VCS incarnation. Its flickery graphics and choppy scrolling killed the game. I'm happy to report that the 5200 version comes almost indistinguishably close to the arcade original. In **Moon Patrol**, you take control of an armored go buggy, tooling across the lunarscape. It's just you against alien spaceships, tanks, and a grueling, pockmarked path. In addition to the vehicle-swallowing pits natural to the landscape, the enemy vessels can blast holes in front of you.

5200 **Moon Patrol** successfully retains both the the wild gameplay and the trademark audiovisual effects that helped to distinguish **Moon Patrol** in the arcades. The background graphics are gorgeous, and the soundtrack does a terrific job of setting a playful mood – while incorporating some of the eeriest sound effects found in a classic home videogame. And since the key to conquering this game lies in the precise timing of jumps, the joysticks do not detract from the gameplay one bit. Recommended. - Iida

7

MR. DO!'S CASTLE
Parker Bros, for Atari 5200

For a clown, this guy leads a pretty hectic life. After a long, hard day of harvesting cherries and apples in his orchard, **Mr. Do!** returns home to his castle, only to find it infested with evil, murderous unicorns! Once again forced to fend for his life, **Mr. Do!** doesn't give up without a fierce, fun-filled struggle.

The castle seems made for defense, as every tier consists of tiles that may conveniently trap and squash the mythical beasts. Ladders are scattered all around, some of which are stationary, others may be kicked diagonally. **Mr. Do!** himself will fall through any empty hole he steps in, thus providing yet another means for his escape.

Mr. Do!'s Castle has numerous similarities with **Lode Runner** and Universal's own **Space Panic**, but adds the element of strategic floor tiles including cherries (to complete a level), skulls (to drop a row of tiles) and keys (to activate the bonus). Awaiting at the top are two doors which, once opened, reveal a cross. Acquiring the cross will allow **Mr. Do!** to utilize the hammer against the unicorns, while they temporarily become letters of EXTRA for, you guessed it, an extra life.

The second in the most original series of video games of all time is one of the 5200's better offerings despite mediocre controls. While still not as impressive as the Colecovision version, it's another faithful arcade translation for 5200 owners. - Bueno

7

Random Retrieval

Vita Retro Reviews

A.E.

Atari, for Atari 5200

A.E. is one of the few prototypes auctioned by Best Electronics. It is a shooting contest similar to the Namco classic Galaga. Enemies come in formation, swirling across the screen. Shooting an enemy consists of pressing and holding the fire button, thus launching a missile charge. Then you can let go of the fire button, allowing the charge to explode. It's a clever idea, and it takes time to get used to but at least for the time it was original. To advance to higher levels you must get 3 "perfect" waves cleared, meaning three formations must be destroyed. Each level is drawn-in by the computer. While I think they were trying to IMPRESS us with the drawing and filling, the graphics are dull and grainy, and it seems to take longer watching it this way.

Going from level to level takes longer than I care for. It ruins any momentum you get. Also, sometimes the background graphics distract from the matter at hand, as you can't always see your own fire, much less your enemies. Although I don't own the Atari 800 diskette version of A.E., I have to assume this is a direct port, common for the time. - Villalpando

5.5

Pitfall II: The Lost Caverns

Activision, for Atari 5200

The 5200 version of **Pitfall II** is the same as the 2600 as far as game play. It has been upgraded graphically so that the trees look more like trees. The caves look more like caves and so on. The big difference is that this game really does contain "lost caverns". *A second quest* is accessed by completing the first. It's not even mentioned in the instructions. A friend of mine, Jeff Adkins, brought it to my attention.

The same layout used in the 2600 version can be used here to complete the first adventure. Sort of like **Zelda** in a primitive way. I also drew a 2600 map which can be found in the 2600 Connection issue #10. Cross over the threshold which appears at the end of Game 1 and you enter the all new world of Game 2. The game difficulty just went up a notch! The bats have to be jumped over this time because they swoop downwards. The frogs can come straight at you now. There are precipices that have to be bridged by timing your jumps across. There are now 4 new objects to collect: the Swami, basket, flute and golden rope. The golden rope is found in the upper left-most section and it is a bitch to try to get. You have to cross a very long hazardous corridor to reach it, so save it for last. When you have all 4 objects, go to the large room on the right side. Stand in the middle. The swami will charm the golden rope out of the basket with the flute. You and all of your friends will then climb the rope and be able to escape to the surface. Nice ending to a beautiful game! A masterpiece originally created by David Crane and added to by Mark Rutkowski. - Backiel

8.5

Realsports Soccer

Atari, for Atari 5200

Ah, this review brings forth both such grief and celebration. It grieves me to give this cart such a bad grade because it holds such a special place in my heart. But, cheers, that same bad grade reflects the incredible improvement in sports games over the course of my video career.

Critics hailed 5200 **Soccer** universally upon its release in early 1983. Gone were the little squares and dots of 2600 soccer. This was the real thing. Though stick figures, the players featured remarkably smooth animation. Ball movement was extremely realistic, right down to the ball's shadow. Great use was made of the 5200s revolutionary analog controllers—move the joystick a little and the player walks. Jerk it all the way to the side and he sprints. Though 5200 joysticks are much maligned (and justifiably so--they never work), let's remember that everyone out there today is gushing about analog control; Atari was a pioneer in this area. Atari also employed the keypad nicely. By punching appropriate numbers and buttons players can blast short, medium, or long shots, ground or aerial passes. In all, the game captured quite a bit of the feel of soccer back then. Computer controlled players make runs and run onto passes, one-on-one showdowns with defenders introduce some real competition, and it's jst about as exasperating to hit the crossbar in this game as it is in real soccer.

Even back in 1983 the game had its serious flaws. The one player game is worthless; you can score at will against the computer. There is little art to shooting. Short, medium, and long shots will always score from certain spots (and never score from others), so your task is to navigate yourself to those spots via dribbling and passing, shake your defender, and let fly. Goalies are completely computer controlled and if you shoot from the right spot they'll basically just stand there and let the ball go in.

This game gave me hundreds of hours of fun in the early to mid-eighties. I imagine it plays as well as or better than any other "classic" soccer cart; indeed, the two-player game is more fun than lots of soccer garbage that came out for the NES and SMS. Still, why bother when there are so many superior versions of soccer currently available for the 32-bit systems? Today it's just a nostalgia piece that holds very little play value but lots of fond memories. - Cooper

5

Robotron: 2084

Atari, for Atari 5200

This cart is noteworthy simply because, as far as I know, it is the only version of **Robotron** that allows gamers to effectively use two joysticks; in short, it's the only version that allows you to play the game as it

was intended to be played. It also highlights the nutty approach Atari took toward controllers. They produced revoltionary analog controllers that, when new, worked great–but only on certain games. They offered an elaborate (and pricey) Trak-ball controller. They included the joystick coupler for free with **Space Dungeon** and **Robotron**, and it works wonderfully on both games. Snap a 5200 controller into each slot of the coupler and you are ready to rumble--one stick moves your character, the other fires. Yet for all their recognition of the importance of controllers, Atari never offered a simple four-way joystick to work with blockbuster releases of **Pac-Man** and **Ms. Pac-Man** (my understanding is that the subject of a four-way 5200 controller created a great deal of in-fighting at Atari). Ther is much about that company that I will never understand.

Anyway, 5200 **Robotron** is not as good graphically as the 7800 version, much less the arcade ports that exist for the 32-bit systems. Nor does it have quite the level of intensity of those later versions. It looks and feels kinda old. But it still plays pretty well, and if you want to use two joysticks instead of two thumbs (which I have never gotten used to), it's the only **Robotron** in town. - Cooper

8

SUPER COBRA

Parker Bros, for Atari 5200

Simply put, **Super Cobra** is a gutter-level stinker. The graphics suck, control is terrible (even with the Masterplay Interface) and the game is so difficult that it makes **Viewpoint** for the Neo Geo seem like child's play. To be fair, I was never crazy about the arcade version either - it had none of the flair or game balance that **Scramble**, its prequel, was renowned for.

You take control of a chopper armed with bombs and shoot missiles, and after each defeat you can continue the game, as in **Vanguard**. If you complete all ten rounds, you are rewarded with a special contest (picking up booty). Unless you have a Masterplay Interface AND are an immensely dexterous gamer, however, don't expect to ever see the bonus round. If you're a masochist, this one's for you. The dud of the 5200 game library along with **James Bond**, **Congo Bongo** and **Buck Rogers**. - Iida

3

Gorf

CBS, for Atari 5200

Gorf is four games in one. Here's why that's not ALWAYS a good thing. **Gorf** is four CRAPPY games in one. Is that a bargain? Not to me.

I remember when **Gorf** first graced my local arcade spot. It seemed like a bit of an anomoly, taking bits of other games that were already considered primitive (**Space Invaders** and **Galaxian**), stripping those down even more, then adding a few spinoffs to the mix. Well, it wasn't all that great then, it's pretty bad now, and it's just plain AWFUL on the Atari 5200.

Four of the five arcade scenes are here: Astro Battles (**Space Invaders** with just three rows of aliens), Laser Attack (**Galaxian** minus two thirds of the attackers but with two fast laser guns added in), Space Warp (**Space Invaders** with just one invader spinning around the playfield), and Flag Ship (one ship zipping back and forth as you shoot through its hull). Missing is the real **Galaxian** scene, but most every home port of **Gorf** is missing this screen. Curious.

If it were a direct port of the arcade, I'd probably give it a 6. These games are pretty tired by today's standards, and like I said, **Gorf** was never really "original" anyway. Come to think of it, **Gorf** is the video game equivalent of a K-Tel record: Lots of hits no longer on the charts and not guaranteed to be the original artist!

Finally, there's the Atari 5200 problems: this time the stick works in analog fashion by moving you entirely too fast around the playfield. It takes time just to handle the thing. Then there's the buttons that just make your hands hurt after a few minutes. Put it all together and you get this wonderful score. Even if you use a Wico stick you'll find that careful maneuvering around the barrage of enemy fire is almost always impossible. In these action arcade games, you sometimes have to be able to move exactly two pixels to get out of harm's way - not one, not three, but two. It just can't be done with this conversion, leading to low scores to add to your cramped left hand.

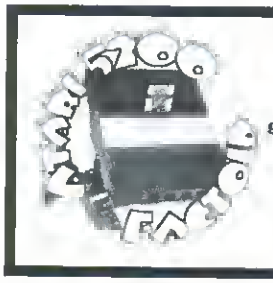
3

If you're at a garage sale and you see this one, give the owner my condolences! - Santulli

OTHER ATARI 5200 REVIEWS: TITLE/ISSUE/RATING

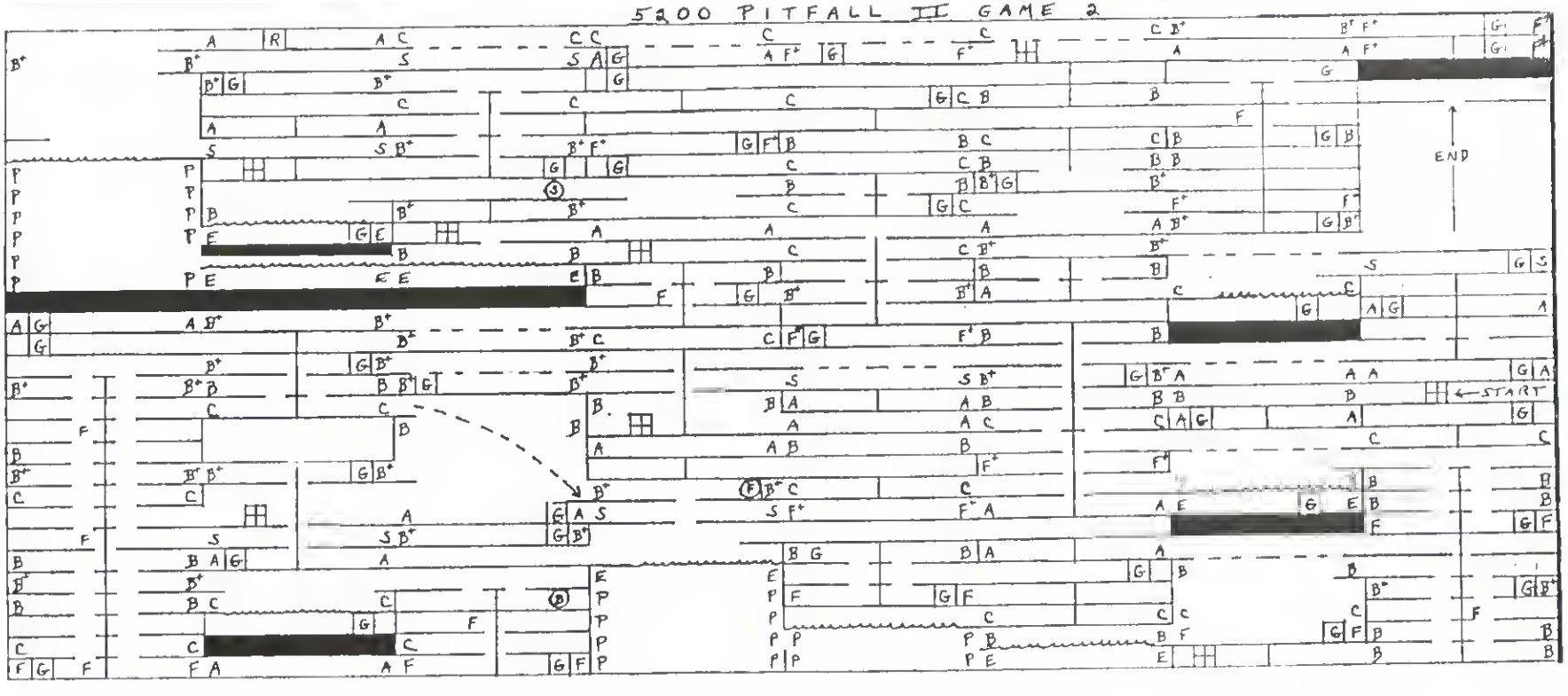
Dreadnaught Factor, The/dp06/8.0
Space Dungeon/dp06/none
Gremlins/dp15/9.0
Meteorites/dp19/6.2
Star Trek/dp21/5.6
Dreadnaught Factor, The/dp22/9.0
Qix/dp23/5.0
Zenji/dp23/7.0
Pole Position/dp27/6.0

Random Retro Bits Lite



The 5200 was originally conceived as Atari's answer to Mattel's Intellivision, NOT the Colecovision as many people think. As an example, the 5200's analog joystick was a response to Mattel touting its unit having 16 positions of movement compared to the 2600's eight. Atari's plan was to upstage the Intellivision in this area by creating an analog controller with 360 degreas of full motion control.

Al Backiel's Pitfall II: Lost Caverns Map



ENEMIES

A ANT
B BAT
C CONDOR
E = EEL
F FROG
P = PIRANHA
S SCORPION
x+ more aggressive

OBJECTS

(B) = BASKET (1)
(L) FLUTE (1)
[G] = GOLD BAR (40+)
[R] = GOLDEN ROPE (1)
(S) SWAMI (1)
⊞ = RED CROSS (8)

HAZARDS

= BRIDGE
= JUMP
= LADDER
= SOLID ROCK
= WATER

"Charming the Golden Rope is Pitfall Harry's only hope."

SECOND Quest!

(Continued from page 5)

they were not considering the most influential games. But, in the same breath they say their list was based primarily on game play and the ones they considered to be the most fun. Well doesn't that sound like some of the classics? I would definitely think so. I also question some of their choices. Adventures of Lolo (NES) , Chew-Man-Fu (TG16), Rygar (NES) seem to be glaring omissions. How much better can Qix be on the NES than on the 5200? Tetris, no problem. But, doesn't Kirby's Avalanche and Tetris Attack seem a little redundant? For the same reason I wouldn't have picked Link's Adventure if I had already picked Zelda. Enough nitpicking already!

(Continued from page 6)

The last alternative also happens to be the most useful. Electra Concepts saw fit to bless us with the Masterplay Interface. This miracle box enables the user to use any 2600 compatible joystick on the 5200. It comes with an auxillary switch that functions as a second fire button, and can be velcroed to the stick. Basically, the Masterplay plugs into the 5200 and has 2 ports. One is for the 2600 type joystick and the other is for the standard 5200 stick. You still need a working keypad from a standard stick to utilize the keypad/Start buttons. The main problem with the Masterplay is finding one. They're almost impossible to find (I've never found one myself) and if you are lucky enough to find one it's usually missing the auxillary button. If you manage to locate one from a gamer/collector, expect to shell out more than a few dollars for it.

In terms of usefulness, the Masterplay can't be beat. However, most gamers can make due with the Wico or Competition Pro joysticks. Unfortunately, these products are not in abundance and the average 5200 gamer doesn't have the luxury of picking the one they want. Basically, you take what you can get and make the best of it.

BUEMOVISION

FAILURES: What went wrong with *Mortal Kombat 4* and *Street Fighter III*?

It is with deep regret that I write this article, but somebody had to do it. Two of the most influential series of video games in the 1990's have finally gone way, way down in quality. It will be very difficult for me to explain, let alone justify this opinion, but I will attempt to do so in a rational, justified manner.

First, let's start off with **Street Fighter III**. Most of us are in agreement that the original **Street Fighter** was a lousy, tedious, boring game with mediocre audiovisuals and poor control. **Street Fighter II** really needs no introduction or explanation. And most of the following upgrades (including **Alpha I** and **II**) were decent efforts and enjoyable to play (although personally, I never cared for **SF: The Movie** or **Super Turbo**). I was dreading that Capcom would drop the ball with part III; their previous effort, **Alpha II**, is indeed a very tough act to follow. What went wrong here?

First, I take my hat off to Capcom for not succumbing to make this game 3-D. I've never played **SF EX**, but since I detested the look and gameplay of the **Virtua Fighter**, **Tekken**, and **Tobal** series as well as **War Gods**, it's probably not for me (although I can't say for certain, for you never know until you play). At a glance, the characters appear interesting. We have Ken and Ryu, of course, along with an insect-like moth man, a zombie-like freak, a boxer, female ninja, skater kid, a younger shotokan fighter, huge military-looking man, and a stunning jungle woman. For some reason, none of these characters are very much fun to play, and the whole game seems to have the same underlying difficulty problem as **MK Trilogy**. The first two or three fighters are so easy, it's pathetic, and just when you start to get cocky and show off your character's special moves, computer AI gets very cheap, and makes it all but impossible to emerge victorious.

When I first played **SFIII**, I hated it. Giving it a few more tries, I no longer abhor the game, but it certainly doesn't hold my attention, and I find myself far more engrossed in the myriad other coin-ops like **Bust-a-Move**, **Point Blank**, **Rampage**, **Elevator Action II**, and the Namco classic arrangements.

I wish I could say that the whole fighting game scene is getting old, but then, I wouldn't play **SFA2** religiously on the Playstation if that were the case. I suppose lack of originality is the biggest factor here (Necro's limbs stretch, but he's slow, Dudley has a leaping uppercut as a special move, and although Sean isn't identical to Ken and Ryu, a lot of his moves are very familiar), but nobody ever said a game had to be original to be enjoyable.

Am I the only one who feels this way? Judging from the fact that the only SFIII machine at the arcade is always vacant, probably not. I remember a time when up to four SFII machines were always occupied, and interest gradually seemed to wane with every upgrade.

When I learned that **Mortal Kombat 4** would be 3-D, I dreaded that gameplay and graphics would take a turn for the worse. Most of the characters are new, and everyone has the ability to execute Steven Seagal-type limb snapping techniques. Also, everyone may pull out a large weapon (i.e. spear, sword, hammer) from behind their back. Those leg, arm, and neck-twisting moves are ridiculous, and the weapons serve more as a hindrance than an advantage. And by now the novelty of moves such as Scorpion's spear, Sub-Zero's ice and statue, and Raiden's electricify and superman move has worn off. There were a few people playing and watching this game, but judging from the initial lack of enthusiasm which surrounds it, I don't think **MK4** will enjoy the popularity of its predecessors.

I know this column will probably not sit well with many readers, whilst others will agree whole-heartedly. I'd very much like to hear any rebuttals or acknowledgements.

ROMpage! featuring Sean Kelly

Flooded.

An interesting thought occurred to me the other day and I can't quite decide which side of the fence to be on - kinda unusual for me huh? It has a bit to do with the player/collector debate, but the issue is a bit more complex than it might seem at first glance.

Sean was unable to recover many of his rore game manuals in the flood, but at least he got this great squid out of the deal.

We had something of a wake-up call here at the 'ol ROMpage headquarters over the summer. About mid-June there was a storm like I had never seen before. Rain by the bucketfulls, literally constant lightning, power outages, flooding - you name it. The flooding aspect of things was what hit home. The wife and kids and I were sitting around watching a little TV in our ROMpage capes when we noticed things starting to float by. This is no exaggeration boys and girls! In a matter of minutes we had a good 4 inches of water down here in our basement family room! Before all was said and done, we had over three feet.

It was a once in a lifetime kinda thing I'm told. The neighbors on either side of me have each been here for over 30 years. Although I find it curious that the 85-year-old man on the south side of me had taken measures to prevent flooding and was likely the only one for blocks around that didn't get water. There's a mall less than 50 yards from my backdoor which was under about five feet of water. A mini-van parked right near the entrance was completely invisible except for it's luggage rack.

Where's the pertinent info? Well, much of my videogame collection was stored down here in "my part", as my wife calls it, of the basement. I had three small file cabinets used for storing instruction manuals - all toast. More than 75% of my classic videogame magazine collection was underwater and didn't fare too well. Numerous cartridges, boxed carts, and even shrinked carts were down here floating around. Eleven Vectrex systems defied the "do not expose to moisture" warning on the back of the units - although there is no warning against swimming. This is just the tip of the iceberg folks.

I'd guess the loss that has bugged me the most has been my magazines. Once we got rid of the water, I did my best to dry them out so they were still legible although not what I would consider collectible condition anymore. The pages didn't stick together, but they dried with this rippling that I don't think will ever flatten again.

Loose cartridges seem to have handled the water without any trouble. Boxed cartridges were a different story and shrinked carts were generally ruined as the water was trapped inside them with no real way of drying out. Literally 97% of the manuals down here were completely ruined and I had several thousand of them. I tried to dry them out to no avail. Throwing out manuals like Intellivision **Congo Bongo**, 2600 **Mr. Do's Castle**, 5200 **Meteorites**, etc. etc. etc. just KILLED me!

Now it was not my intention to sit here and cry in my beer about the stuff I lost. I did have flood insurance and was compensated more than justly, but the issue really has nothing to do with the money. What I'm thinking about here is how many more people is something catastrophic like this going to happen to and what effect would it have to collectors several years down the road. Never mind catastrophic losses by collectors, how about the average Joe that just throws the stuff out that's been collecting dust is his attic for the past ten years.

We could sit here and debate whether there even will be collectors several years down the road, but it's been done before and it gets old. I believe the general consensus to be that this is not a fad and collecting will continue for many years to come. The values of individual titles may change due to increased or decreased demand for them, but there's always going to be people collecting this stuff. Take a look at the toy collectors. How about the antique collectors? They've all be doing it for eons and for basically the same reasons we are collecting games if you take it to it's most basic level.

A rare magazine floats into his grasp... suddenly a rabid sea otter whisks off with it.

The major fuel feeding the frenzy of collecting videogames is nostalgia with historical and preservation interests thrown in there as well. I am simply not convinced play value has as much to do with it as some might lead you to believe. Sure some of the games are a lot of fun to play, but if you had never played, seen, or heard of them before, they wouldn't be anywhere near as attractive as they might be to those that spent a gazillion hours trying to beat a game fifteen years ago.

The word "nostalgia" comes from two Greek words - nostos and algos which mean "a return home" and "a

pain" respectively. How particular is this pain though? Can it be soothed by the likes of emulators, pictures, and stories? Do the actual games have to be in your possession or would viewing them in a museum type of setup be sufficient? Of course the answer is something of personal thing, but I believe a general answer common to at least most collectors is not much of a stretch of the imagination.

Let's set the scene here:

It's 5am Christmas morning 1980. You wake much earlier than your parents will allow you to get them up so you just kinda hang out around the Christmas tree for a while trying to figure out what might be in those neatly-wrapped packages. You mull around for a bit peeling back a corner here and there to see if you can catch a glimpse. With not much else to do, you fall back asleep on the couch. When you awake you rush to the clock to check the time only to find out it's now 5:20 and you have another hour and forty minutes to wait. It's torture and you contemplate setting all the clocks in the house ahead by an hour but can't figure out how to change the one in your parents' room without waking them.

The time has finally come and you wake your parents, practically dragging their butts over to the Christmas tree waiting for the "green light". You'd previously scoped-out the packages and had the first one to open ear-marked. The words "go ahead" are faintly heard and you're off! Wrapping paper? Heh, you tear through it like nobody's business. There it is staring you square in the face - the Atari 2600! You just kind of sit there in awe for a few seconds with this big-ass smile on your face.

What I have tried to describe above is a feeling that's, for the most part, indescribable. As an adult the only thing that can compare to it is sex for those of us that know what THAT feeling is like (sorry Clint). The feeling you're trying to recapture can be all the more real by holding the actual item in your hand. If I were to re-write the little scenario above and instead of using the Atari 2600 as an example, I could write something like this:

"There it is staring you square in the face - an old re-labeled AOL freebie floppy disk with God only knows what on it."

Doesn't quite have the same effect now does it? I'm not ragging on emulators at all. I'm more trying to demonstrate a situation or a feeling.

Where I've been heading with all of this is what happens when finding the actual components is practically a lost cause? There's no real way to tell exactly how often it happens, but each year more and more of the stuff gets destroyed in one way or another. Chalk-up a few thousand boxes and manuals right here this summer! How will it be possible to fill the nostalgic void when you can't find the stuff anymore?

The memories will always be there and they'll naturally be more vivid or fresh if you are able to obtain the actual item for which you have fond memories. What you use to bring them to the surface will have to adapt with the time times though. Naturally you'll do the best you can to get a hold of the things that are more important to you, but the things that have little or no nostalgic value to you will either be too expensive or impossible to find. This is evident to many collectors even now. Here's where the historical aspect of things slaps you in the face. Did you actually have a **Chase the Chuckwagon** cartridge when you were a kid? Is the game even the least bit of fun to play? Most collectors will answer "No" to both questions. Therefore the only possible explanation for any desire to have that particular game (as well as many others that would fall into the same category) in your collection would be a: "Wow! I never knew they made that game for the 2600!" In the years to come, such interests wil harder to pacify and information about these types of games will have to suffice.

I'm not trying to start some sort of panic here - only bring an issue to light that should be considered by most collectors as it will likely be a factor in the years to come. Looking at pictures of the 2600's system box might not seem like the way to go now, but it may be the best you can do at some point. Playing Adventure on PCAtari in a window on your computer will never be the same as playing it on a real 2600 hooked-up to a TV, but you're at least able to play it. You might even consider settling for pictures of a **Chase the Chuckwagon** cartridge and playing it on the emulator. You'll quickly find out that the game sucks and pictures of the box and cartridge along with 8000+ others can be had on one of the products I'm about to plug.

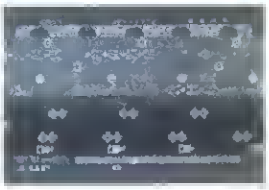
OK time for a quick couple of plugs here. First off, John Dondzila has completed his latest title for the Vectrex - **Spike Hoppin'**. The game features you know who playing out a little **Q*Bert** fantasy he's had for years. John did a good job on it and it's well worth the meager twenty bucks he charges for it so go get that checkbook now. For those of you that have my Vectrex multi-cart and are wondering if it will be included, the answer has yet to be determined. The game is larger than any other Vectrex game to date and I don't know if my cartridge will be able to handle a game of it's size. Even if it can, it will require the elimination of four demos on the cart and I'm undecided if I want to do that or not.

Second plug is for the DPCD. We have a full-page devoted to it, but in case you missed it, get your ass back there and check it out! :)

Code namas had alwaye been popular at Warner Atari. The VCS was internally referred to as "Stella," the 400 computer was "Candy," the 800 wae "Colleen" and the 5200 wae nicknamed "Pam." All of the aforementioned machinee were named after well-endowed female employees who were working at Atari. The 5200 was unique in that Atari strongly considered using Pam es the actual name of the unit before changing it to "Video System X" and eventuelly deciding on 5200. Why? Becauee it would heva been an appropriate ebbreviation for "Personal Arcade Mechine."

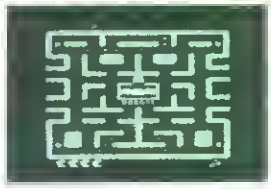
MARK TERRY:

ATARI 5200: B.F.D!

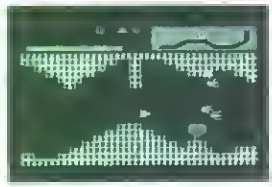


5200 Frogger: Crap.

5200 Gorf: Crap.



5200 Ms. Pac-man: Crap.



5200 Super Cobra: Crap.

The 5200.

I don't get it.

To me the 5200 represents a company's mad rush to bring a bigger and better system to the market. They were only half right. The system was only bigger. Other systems were *better* and the 5200, in comparison, becomes a half thought of, half assed idea. A system that Atari itself deemed a failure. A veritible Hindenburg of a unit that parallels both it's size and tragic outcome.

I have no love for the system. I was a late bloomer on the 5200 One Man Bandwagon. I picked one up back in '94 or so when my gaming counterpart Scott Stone and I were enjoying our rebom exhilaration with classic games. We started an unspoken collecting competition among ourselves that still continues today. I grew up a poor but happy kid who couldn't really afford games for the 2600 much less the high cost of a new system or metaphorically put, "Another mouth to feed." The 2600 was a treasured luxury made possible by a mother's love for her sons and her own enthusiasm for playing. (Mom's favorites are **Air Sea Battle**, H.E.R.O. and **Astroblast**.) Maybe , at the time, I couldn't allow myself to like the 5200 because again, at the time, it wasn't affordable. This I consider a blessing in disguise. Let's take a look at the hardware, shall we? First off.... Joysticks that when the did function and weren't disintegrating in your hand, still did not self center making gameplay difficult. The challenge of plaing the game should be the focus. Not the challenge of playing a game with an inferior stick. This is not to say that the concept behind the stick wasn't revolutionary. A stick equipped with dual firing buttons on both sides that made for easy access with both the thumb and the index finger. The addition of a numerical keypad for direct access to difficulty levels, number of players or even incorporated into gameplay, i.e. choosing a football play. But the execution of the physical mechanics of this innovative design brings up but one question. What were they thinking?

Secondly.... A power transformer that was so big that it would have helped David take out an army of Goliaths. Couple that with a complex RF adaptor that also serves as the systems power cord. I will again admit genius in it's capability of "Automatic switching" between TV signal and game signal and again berate the execution of the idea by turning it into a complicated hookup with an extraneous piece of hardware. This brings me to the same unsolved deducement. What were they thinking? Here's my take on that.

Perhaps the 5200 design was to announce it's presence with authority. Bigger is not better. I understand the hypothesis of more memory, more chips, more power can equated to more size. But the console seemed to be devised to be a bright, boldly lit neon slap in the face reminder that Atari was king of home gaming. A symbolic monolith that was to show itself as the focus of the home instead of the fun family togethemess that can be derived from the simplistic act of the gaming experience. As we all know, Atari was king! Not with the 5200 but with it's half powered, half sized, half numbered predecessor - The 2600. Let's face it. Even with the birth of newer systems in the 1980's the preverbial cord was never cut.

The 5200 had an 2600 adaptor.

The Colecovision had a 2600 adaptor!

The 7800 was designed to pre-accommodate the library of 2600 games!!

Intellivision, under the M-Network label, made games for the 2600!!!

No adaptor. But an obvious reliance on what was the mother, father and nanny to a decade of system.

I don't want this article to become an all out 5200 slamfest. There are good points to the 5200. Games like **Missile Command** and **Centipede** when played with the Trakball controller were sensational. It was by far the closest home/arcade experience the system could offer. What the 5200 did achieve was bringing us more accurate versions of the current arcade favorites. **Qix**, **Jungle Hunt**, **Pengo**, **Berzerk**, **Moon Patrol**, **Pac-Man** and **Kangaroo**. These are great games but the hardware obstacle made these games less enjoyable. Conversely, **Robotron 2084** plays flawlessly with the dual stick holder. However, I feel the game mechanics itself overcame the poor hardware construction. A stumbling block that with some engineering forethought could have been avoided.

For a moment let's step back and take a look at the Colecovision. Arcade translations for that system also brought us great graphics and sound. It also gave us a playable joystick that made the whole system more enjoyable. The focus was games, not image. I love the near perfect versions of **Frenzy**, **Bump-N-Jump**, **Turbo**, **Tapper**, **Congo Bongo**, **Ladybug**, **Spy Hunter** and **Mr. Do!**. Even the versions of **Centipede**, **Defender**, **Galaxian** and **Jungle Hunt** by Atarisoft were superior in all ways to their 5200 brothers. No grey area for me as to which system is better.

I do not and would never consider to take away from any ones enjoyment of the system, it's games or the warm fuzzy nostalgic feeling one might have when reminiscing about times spent with this friend. These are only my opinions based on my observations and personal experiences. After all I an only a fanatical lunatic. Ask around.

A wise man once said, "Haste makes waste." Or was it, "Don't waste paste." Perhaps it was, "The Space Case needs more mace." Well it doesn't really matter. The point is the same. The 5200 didn't make sense. and I again state.....

I don't get it!

FOR SALE: Atari 2600, 7800, and Intellivision cartridges; some with instructions. Please call or write: Richard Feroli, 88 Ettrick St, Brockton, MA 02401-5802. (508) 587-1146.

WANTED: APF-MP1000 system/cartridges. Intellivision cartridges Fathom, Swords & Serpents, Tropical Trouble, White Water, Diner, Dig Dug, Body Slam Wrestling, Learning Fun I & II, Spiker! Volleyball, Triple Challenge, Turbo, Ladybug, Worm Whomper, Super Cobra, Tutankham, Sewer Sam, Congo Bongo, Demo Cart 1983, Int'l Demo, Test Cart. No copies please! Send condition and asking price to: Michael Roode/95A1187, PO Box 4580, 6100 School Rd, Rome, NY 13442-4580.

FOR SALE: Nintendo 64 Star Fox (sealed) $40; 2600 Blueprint - $5; 2600 Mogul Maniac (no end label) - $8; 2600 Revenge/Beefsteak Tomatoes - $5; 2600 Spiderdroid (sealed) - Instructions, Box, $8; 5200 Congo Bongo - $5; CLCO War Room - $9; IBCD 7th Guest (sealed) - Instructions, Box, $20; IBM Sound Blaster Pro w/Speakers - Instructions, Box, $20; INTV Blockade Runner - $7; ODY2 Quest for the Rings (some pieces missing) - Instructions, Box, $15; SNES Mortal Kombat II (sealed) - Instructions, Box, $12; TG16 R-Type - Instructions, Box, $10; VECT Armor Attack - Instructions, Box, Overlay, $12. Prices include shipping to US locales. Joe Santulli, 44 Hunter Place, Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442.

FOR SALE OR TRADE: VCS Asterix, Up N Down, BMX Airmaster (Atari), Qbelix (NTSC), Wall Ball; Atari Computer Tapper, Q*Ber'ts Qubes; ColecoVision Sector Alpha, Sewer Sam, Slurpy; PC Engine Darius Plus, Power Drift, Thunder Blade, SCI; Odyssey2 Popeye. FOR TRADE: VCS Stargunner, Submarine Commander, Frogger II; Atari 5200 James Bond, Star Wars Arcade, Frogger II; 7800 Wtar Ski; Intellivision Fathom, Test Cartridge; ColecoVision Montezuma's Revenge, Tarzan, War Room; Systems: Mega Boy, Video Arcade II, Mark III, Super Pong. Many more games and systems available. Write for list. Edward Villalpando, 13525 Utica St, Whittier, CA 90605.

WANTED: Q*Bert, Pac-Man, & Frogger memorabilia: Write: Rich Fenick, 1081 Merillon Ave, Westbury, NY 11590.

WANTED: Atari 400 games wanted! I am looking to buy or trade for atari 400/800 games. I have many 2600, 5200, and intellivision games for trade. A list can be seen at http://pilot.msu.edu/user/reicher6/2600.html. If you have any games for trade e-mail me at reicher6@pilot.msu.edu.

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WHAT'S THERE:
200 pages of listings and information for all of our favorite cartridge-based systems, long forgotten by contemporary publications but long-cherished by gamers: Atari 2600, 5200 and 7800, Intellivision, ColecoVision, and AdventureVision.
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WHAT'S NEW:
* 3.01 thru 3.07 additions are all here, "Addendums" as printed in Digital Press.
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* Hundreds of product additions, corrections, and updates.
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* Trivia section.
* Copyright dates have been added in some areas to help chronology buffs.
* PsychOphile entries provide the editor's capsulized views on hundreds of games.
* Magazine ratings of the games have been included where applicable.
* The scarceOmeter tells you how hard each game is to come by.

WHERE TO GET IT:
Only here. Send us $15, made out to Joe Santulli. Don't be the last on your block to have one!

The 5200 was created at a time when poor marketing and questionable company policy ran rampant within Atari. The 5200 controller was developed by an individual who had NEVER even played a single video game in his life! Response to the controllers from focus groups and clinics were poor, but the marketing arm stubbornly insisted on releasing the system with the "groundbreaking" elements intact. In addition, the controller was partially influenced by corporate policy where hardware designers and engineers were offered bonuses for creating designs that received patents. Not surprisingly, many engineers and designers developed hardware that were innovative for the sake of being "original", with complete disregard for functionality.

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NOTE-WORTHY

play your favorite classic arcade games on your PC!

If you've been surfing the net, you've undoubtedly stumbled into a host of home console and arcade game emulators for your PC. Some of them are very good: we really love PC Atari and Stella for the Atari 2600 games and ColEm for ColecoVision. Now there are emulators for just about everything, but here's one that's REALLY special: It's called M.A.M.E. (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator), and it's very easy to set up and use. It's also really easy to lose a few days of work while wrapped up in the over 250(!) arcade games it presently supports!

If you haven't already tapped it, you can find M.A.M.E. and all of its supported ROM files on our website at **http://www.digitpress.com**. I've made things REALLY easy for Windows '95 users: there are complete install instructions included right there on the M.A.M.E. access page.

There are most of the familiar classics here - ALL of the commercially released Williams/Midway/Atari arcade classics are there, as well as games you've seen in Microsoft Home Arcade. But here's just a SAMPLE of the some of the more obscure, original arcade games you can be playing in just a few minutes right at your PC: **Bagman, Black Tiger, Black Widow, Cloak & Dagger, Crazy Climber, Discs of Tron, Donkey Kong 3, Espial, Fantasy, Invinco, Jump Bug, Kickman, Lost Tomb, Mad Planets, Moon Cresta, Motos, Mr. Do! Run Run,** Pac & Pal, **Pleiades, Q*Bert's Qubes, Reactor,** Satan's Hollow, **Space Fury, The End, Timber, Time Pilot 84, Tron, Vulgus, Wacko, Yie Ar Kung Fu, Zektor,** and lots more.

The beauty of it all is that the developers are constantly working, and judging from the production notes they release with each new version of M.A.M.E., there appears to be dozens of talented programmers on the project.

If you haven't checked it out yet, get online right now and get yourself a copy. You just can't have a PC and NOT have M.A.M.E. too.

Digital Press is dedicated to the memory of my best friend, Kevin Oleniacz. Kevin's spirit will be with us through every homing missile fired, knockout punch delivered, UFO destroyed, and finish line crossed.

Play recklessly. Think positively. Live EVERY moment to the fullest.